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## Fifth Committee

**Summary record of the 10th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 28 October 2016, at 3 p.m.

*Chair*: Ms. King ..... (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions*: Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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Agenda item 139: Human resources management (*continued*)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Agenda item 139: Human resources management** (A/71/186, A/71/257, A/71/258, A/71/323, A/71/323/Add.1, A/71/323/Add.2, A/71/334, A/71/360, A/71/360/Add.1, A/71/393, A/71/393/Add.1 and A/71/557) (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Wairatpanij** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, recognized the exemplary contribution of United Nations staff and their families and paid tribute to those staff who had lost their lives in the line of duty. Given its mission to coordinate global efforts to address worldwide challenges in line with evolving mandates and under the scrutiny of public opinion, the Organization required a diverse, flexible and dynamic workforce that was motivated, adequately compensated and able to ensure effective mandate delivery.

2. The Secretary-General's detailed proposal on the evolving human resources framework, to be submitted at the General Assembly's seventy-third session, must reflect a comprehensive impact assessment of all related initiatives undertaken over the last decade and should address such longstanding challenges as deficiencies in the staff selection process, rejuvenation through external recruitment, performance management, and impediments to achieving targets for gender and geographical balance.

3. The Group attached great importance to the issue of equitable geographical representation in the Secretariat, in line with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations. While it took note of the modest recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the assessment of the system of desirable ranges (A/71/323/Add.2), it regretted that the Secretary-General had failed to respond adequately to the Assembly's requests for concrete proposals to enhance the effectiveness of the system of desirable ranges, in order to ensure equitable geographical distribution in relation to the total number of Secretariat staff, and to include peacekeeping and extrabudgetary posts in that system. The Group was particularly disappointed at the continued underrepresentation of developing countries at the Professional and higher levels and the persisting gender imbalance, particularly at the senior leadership level. It was also regrettable that no comprehensive action had been taken to ensure the adequate representation of troop-contributing countries in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, considering the substantial contribution of those countries to peacekeeping. The efforts undertaken to reach out to potential employees from underrepresented Member States, including developing countries, had been ineffective. The Group therefore urged the Secretary-General and his successor to develop a comprehensive strategy to enhance their geographical representation on the basis of an in-depth analysis of the real causes of the current imbalances and an improved arithmetic formula. A truly global Secretariat and international staff composition were essential to ensuring the successful implementation of the Organization's global mandates.

4. The Group invited the Secretary-General designate to continue the efforts undertaken by the current Secretary-General to develop a comprehensive strategy to achieve gender equality at all Professional levels within the Secretariat by 2030, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5, in order to enhance the Organization's credibility by ensuring that its own culture and management reflected its commitment to diversity.

5. To strengthen the effectiveness of the young professionals programme as a tool to rejuvenate the Organization and improve equitable geographical representation, emphasis should be placed on enhancing the representation of candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented developing countries and adopting a recruitment approach that extended beyond examinations and ensured adequate recruitment of qualified candidates by the Secretariat.

6. With regard to contractual framework initiatives, fair and consistent criteria for conversion to continuing appointment should be established and the overall ratio of continuing and permanent appointments to total staff should be monitored in order to achieve the appropriate balance. The Group would seek clarification regarding the guidelines on the formulation, approval, execution and assessment of pilot projects in the area of human resources to ensure the credibility and consistency of the reported results.

7. Taking into consideration the limited scope of the first semi-annual staffing exercise and the low rate of

placement under the new staff selection and managed mobility system, the Group would seek further details regarding lessons learned from the system's implementation and its impact on the opportunities for external candidates. It would also seek statistical data related to the use of the new recruitment tool, with the aim of analysing its effectiveness in ensuring gender balance and equitable geographical representation. It was critical to guarantee equal opportunities for internal and external applicants and to verify all reported data on the annual number of geographical moves and the related costs in order to assess the impact and cost of the implementation of the mobility framework. The Group would also examine the implications of the proposal to increase the duration of temporary duty assignments from three to six months, including its impact on costs and recruitment in the field.

8. The Group was concerned at the increase in the number of senior Professional posts and reduction in junior Professional posts, and requested the Secretary-General to address those issues as a matter of priority in his comprehensive workforce and succession planning framework, which should be formulated on the basis of a system-wide approach taking into account best practices. The General Assembly should also address duplication and overlapping of functions in the Organization, which had contributed to the proliferation of senior posts.

9. The Group was concerned at the relatively high average age of Secretariat staff and the low replacement rate of retirees without a gap in service, which could be at variance with efforts to rejuvenate the Organization. It would seek further details on the Secretary-General's proposal to set the earnings limit for retired staff members in receipt of pension benefits at the monetary equivalent of up to 125 working days per calendar year, at the level at which the individual had separated from service. Noting with regret the imbalance in the representation of developed and developing countries among gratis personnel, she emphasized the need to identify ways to rejuvenate the Organization without further widening that imbalance.

10. The Group took note of the proposed amendments to the Staff Regulations contained in annex I to the Secretary-General's report (A/71/258); the request for the General Assembly to approve the proposed implementation and effective dates for the amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules; and the proposed reconsideration of the policy requiring staff members to renounce permanent resident status in a country other than the country of their nationality. It would seek further information on those issues, as well as on the rules governing compensation in the event of death, injury or illness attributable to the performance of official duties on behalf of the United Nations. Lastly, as the Advisory Committee had emphasized in its related report (A/71/557), proposals to amend the Staff Regulations and Rules must follow the decisions of the General Assembly, without pre-empting actions or decisions that the Assembly might take in the future.

11. Welcoming the work done by the Ethics Office over the previous decade to strengthen transparency, accountability and corporate compliance, the Group nevertheless noted the reluctance of some senior managers to participate in the public disclosure of their assets and liabilities and would engage in consultations on the matter with a view to ensuring their full compliance. It was also concerned at the delay in the consultative process relating to the finalization of the revised protection against retaliation policy, which had been under development for two years, and the lack of independence of the Ethics Office, which compromised its functioning. It would seek further information on those issues with a view to strengthening the work of the Office.

12. Taking into consideration the need to enhance human resource capacity to ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Group would seek further details on the deployment of Junior Professional Officers in Secretariat offices and departments, including in peacekeeping missions, and not only in the economic and social arena, as envisaged in Economic and Social Council resolution 849 (XXXII). Lastly, the Group stood ready to reconsider the reporting cycle for the report on the demographic composition of Secretariat staff.

13. **Mr. Teo** Choon Heng (Singapore), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that a dynamic, motivated and adaptable workforce was critical to ensuring the effective implementation of mandates in an ever-evolving environment.

14. The staff composition must reflect the Organization's diverse and international character through more balanced gender and geographical representation at all levels. That would ensure a wider range of views and ideas among staff, thus enhancing the Organization's ability to tackle complex challenges. Noting the increase in the number of staff from underrepresented and overrepresented States between 2015 and 2016, he acknowledged the outreach efforts undertaken by the Office of Human Resources Management and underscored the need for further improvement in that regard. Bearing in mind the need to select the best candidate for every job opening on the basis of the widest possible geographical search, the Secretary-General should ensure that candidates from underrepresented countries, particularly developing countries, were given fair opportunity and consideration.

15. Given the critical importance of an effective recruitment and talent management system, ASEAN trusted that the pilot projects launched to reduce recruitment timelines, including pre-selection tests and general cognitive testing, would be thoroughly reviewed before those initiatives were expanded. With regard to staff retention, the Association would follow with interest the Committee's discussions on staff health and well-being, and on the implementation of the new staff selection and managed mobility system.

16. ASEAN supported a performance management system that was in line with the Organization's needs, while acknowledging that performance management was a two-way process. He therefore welcomed the reforms undertaken by the Secretary-General to increase the objectivity, transparency and consistency of the system, while emphasizing the need for management to continuously assess those changes to evaluate their impact and ensure the system's credibility, fairness and fitness for purpose.

17. **Mr. Abdallah** (Chad), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, noted with appreciation the exemplary work of United Nations staff and paid tribute to those who had lost their lives in the line of duty.

18. Greater efforts were needed to strengthen human resources management in the Organization. While the reports of the Secretary-General currently before the Committee contained many of the proposals already considered by the Assembly at its sixty-ninth and seventieth sessions, they also contained a number of new or revised proposals, such as performance management reforms; changes to the young professionals programme examination; a proposed reduction of the vacancy posting period; career opportunities for General Service staff; proposed amendments to the recruitment restrictions imposed under General Assembly resolution 51/226; and efforts to improve workforce planning.

19. In order to ensure the proper functioning of the Secretariat and the broader United Nations system, the time had come to address the shortcomings of the desirable ranges system, which had been established in 1960. In particular, the parameters of the current unfair system should be revised or replaced with a formula that incorporated the factor of troop contributions, in addition to membership, population and contribution, and a wider range of posts, including technical and extrabudgetary positions. Certain categories of posts should be divided equally among the regions, with quotas reserved for nationals of Member States from each region, and statistical data should be provided by the Secretariat in order to better assess geographical representation and measure progress in that regard.

20. The Group was concerned that vacancies were not being filled in a timely manner, despite the 120-day target for recruitment set by the General Assembly, and emphasized the need to improve all steps in the staff selection process. It would pay close attention to the selection processes for staff members at the P-5 level and above, including at the level of Assistant Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General, to ensure equitable geographical representation and gender balance, and invited the Secretary-General designate to monitor and address gaps in that regard.

21. The fact that there had been only 3,408 external appointments out of 11,085 total job opportunities available from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2015 suggested that the Organization prioritized internal mobility, a practice that deprived it of new skills and qualified external candidates. Recognizing the need to provide qualified staff in the General Service and related categories with opportunities for career progression, based on the principle of equal treatment, the Group would seek further details on the implications of the proposed elimination of the

examination requirement to determine the eligibility of staff in those categories for advancement to the Professional category. It would also seek further information on the review of continuing appointments, particularly those in the Professional and higher categories, the Field Service category and the General Service and related categories.

22. While human resources management pilot projects could be important, they should be accompanied by policy guidance and a basic governance structure, endorsed by the Assembly, so that the costs and benefits of the projects could be analysed and their impact could be assessed in a full and transparent manner. The Group was concerned at the relatively high average age of Secretariat staff members; the low replacement rate of retirees; the slow trend of rejuvenation of the Organization; the deployment of Junior Professional Officers; the limits of the young professionals programme; and the challenges in providing accurate and consistent baseline data on the number of moves in the context of implementing the new staff selection and mobility system. It would seek further details on those issues, as well as on the preparation of the new administrative instruction on investigations and the disciplinary process, and the revised policy on protection against retaliation. The Group would also examine the need for greater integration of efforts to implement Umoja and refine Inspira. He noted, in closing, that the Secretary-General should have responded to the Assembly's repeated requests for concrete proposals that would serve as the basis for its deliberations on human resources management.

23. **Ms. Baumann** (Switzerland), speaking also on behalf of Liechtenstein, said that mandate delivery depended on the skills and motivation of the staff — the Organization's most valuable asset. A modern human resources system that supported a high-performing workforce was critical to ensuring a more productive, flexible and results-oriented Organization. She welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen human resources management and stressed the need for Member States to articulate a clear way forward in its decisions in that area.

24. Welcoming the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the staff mobility framework (A/71/323/Add.1), she said that the framework would improve the strategic management of human resources and provide staff with the opportunity to serve in different functions at various duty stations throughout their career. The Secretary-General should continue to implement the framework, while seeking to optimize it by drawing on the preliminary findings and lessons learned.

25. Staff performance management was critical to assessing the workforce's capacity to achieve the Organization's strategic objectives and strengthening its accountability. A credible, fair performance management system should reward high performance and address underperformance, and performance evaluation should entail joint efforts by staff and managers to plan, monitor and review work objectives with a view to improving the performance of staff and the Organization. She therefore supported the Secretary-General's proposal to reform performance management and encouraged him to draw on the lessons learned by other United Nations system organizations in that regard.

26. She welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to present to the Assembly an updated human resources management framework, which would lead to substantial progress towards implementing the Secretariat-wide strategy for achieving gender equality; additional efforts to shape organizational culture to attract, develop and retain highly motivated staff; and a significant reduction in recruitment timelines. Lastly, she expressed the hope that the Secretary-General designate would give priority to strengthening human resources management.

27. **Ms. Adamson** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Liechtenstein, Norway, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that her delegation supported progressive human resources policies and human resources management reform at the United Nations. It therefore regretted that the Committee had been unable to reach consensus on such reform in the recent past and would work constructively with all parties to do so at the current session.

28. The billions of people worldwide who benefited from the Organization's work deserved a workforce that embodied high standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, as set out in Article 101 of the Charter. The actions of personnel must reflect the Organization's values and the United Nations must, in turn, provide an organizational culture that fostered the full potential of staff. She welcomed the Secretariat's progress in adopting an integrated approach to human resources management that addressed the need to strengthen the Organization's strategic focus in that area, in line with the findings in the report of the Board of Auditors (A/70/5 (Vol. I)) presented at the Assembly's seventieth session.

29. The roll-out of Umoja was enhancing the Organization's oversight of human resources by enabling better data collection, ensuring more accurate performance monitoring and strengthening workforce planning. Her delegation looked forward to learning more about the capabilities of Umoja and the benefits to the Organization, staff and Member States to be expected from its continued implementation.

30. While positive steps had been taken in human resources management, there was scope for further improvement in a number of areas. With regard to performance management, given the ongoing reluctance by managers to identify and address poor performance, prompt and honest efforts should be made to address underperformance at all levels. Her delegation welcomed further discussion with the Secretariat on ways to effect the cultural shift needed in that regard, as well as on its methods of defining and measuring success. She encouraged the Secretariat to continue its efforts to promote the highest standards of ethical conduct at the United Nations.

31. As staff mobility would yield multiple benefits, including career development opportunities and broader experience for individuals in the Organization, as well as the rejuvenation of the workforce, she welcomed the completion of the first voluntary phase of the staff mobility programme. Her delegation would seek further information on how lessons learned from that initial phase would be applied in rolling out the programme to larger numbers of staff. Her delegation would seek further information on how the workforce planning proposals presented in the Secretary-General's report (A/71/323) would contribute to a more holistic approach in that regard. Lastly, she regretted the persisting gender imbalance in the United Nations workforce, particularly at the senior leadership level.

32. She welcomed the Secretary-General's work on a road map for a human resources strategy, to be presented at the Assembly's seventy-third session, and expected that it would reflect more modern policies and procedures in line with best practices and the priorities identified by Member States, while ensuring optimal use of human resources. The Secretariat should nevertheless continue to implement existing mandates with determination.

33. **Mr. Fukuda** (Japan) said that human resources management was critical to the effective functioning of the Organization and emphasized the role of a well-managed mobility programme in improving mandate delivery and supporting the career aspirations of staff members.

34. Appropriate talent must be secured at all levels. In particular, the Secretary-General should continue to facilitate the recruitment of young, diverse talent through the young professionals programme examination and to provide new recruits with opportunities to develop their abilities, with a view to strengthening middle and senior management in the medium and long term. Moreover, given the high number of vacancies at the P-3 and P-4 levels, it was also critical to secure competent mid-career staff. To that end, the Secretary-General should engage both internal and external experts, including associate experts, with excellent professional experience.

35. Human resources professionals and managers should provide career development support to staff members, including opportunities for promotion to those who made outstanding achievements in fulfilling the Organization's mandates. Such opportunities would foster a sense of the credibility and reliability of the talent management system, enabling high-achieving personnel to serve as role models for other young professionals and the Organization to retain talent over the long term. In that connection, the performance management system must be improved. However, given the difficulty of establishing performance indicators to accurately assess individual achievements in the context of public organizations, human resources professionals and managers might be encouraged to assess the reputations of staff members within their

organizational units as part of a holistic approach to performance evaluation, in addition to developing comprehensive indicators and benchmarks. Such an approach could be useful, as the brightest individuals were likely to be already highly regarded by their supervisors, colleagues and subordinates. Lastly, in view of the upcoming transition in leadership to a new Secretary-General, the Assembly should express its collective will by adopting a resolution on human resources management.

36. **Mr. al-Hebedah** (Kuwait) said that his delegation had supported the human resources management reform initiatives undertaken since the Assembly's sixty-third session, which had focused on the priority areas of the contractual framework, including the harmonization of conditions of service; the talent management framework; the implementation of the new common system compensation package; and reforms relating to staff health and well-being.

37. Acknowledging the critical importance of staff, he noted the progress made in the implementation of reforms in the areas of salaries and allowances, the development of a workforce planning methodology, efforts to address delays in the recruitment process and a strategy for the achievement of gender equality.

38. The young professionals programme should be further developed to facilitate the recruitment of qualified candidates. Since his country had begun participating in the programme in 2013, 30 young Kuwaitis of both genders had been recruited.

39. Further reform was needed in the area of training and professional development, with a view to advancing the principles of justice and equality in employment. In particular, efforts should be made to ensure that developed and developing countries were equally represented without discrimination, and that senior posts were not monopolized by the nationals of a few countries. A system to monitor and follow up on reform measures must be developed in order to ensure that effective action was taken.

40. **Mr. Munir** (Pakistan) said that an independent international civil service with the highest standards of performance, integrity and accountability was vital in order to achieve the goals of the Organization. Despite the importance collectively accorded to human resources management, the reform process remained unfinished. Nonetheless, his delegation was pleased with the broad objectives and direction of reform efforts, and believed that the streamlining of contractual arrangements, the harmonization of conditions of service and the managed mobility system represented significant advances. Reforms should continue, and their impact should be evaluated at regular intervals so they could be refined and improved.

41. Mobility represented a major change for the Secretariat as it sought to respond to the growing imperatives of a field-oriented Organization; the mobility and career development framework was a means of ensuring the equitable sharing of the burden of service at hardship duty stations. More specific information was needed with regard to its impact on the current staff selection system, the treatment of external candidates, geographic representation, the representation of troop- and police-contributing countries, and gender balance.

42. His delegation was concerned about the low overall success rate of candidates participating in the young professionals programme and also noted that the number of external appointments had declined every year from 2011 to 2015. He looked forward to discussing those trends in informal consultations and would seek clarification from the Secretariat regarding the benefits and anticipated impact of the programme.

43. Equitable geographical distribution was an obligation arising from the Charter of the United Nations and was necessary in order to ensure that the staff of the United Nations reflected the diversity and dynamism of the Organization itself. The system of desirable ranges had been adopted as a means of fulfilling that obligation, but the factors used to determine the ranges had not changed since 1962. Disparities in Member States' representation in the Secretariat persisted despite the General Assembly's clear wish for the system to be reviewed. Thought should be given to establishing an open-ended working group of the Fifth Committee to consider the formula for the determination of equitable geographical distribution, on the basis of Article 101 of the Charter, as set out in General Assembly resolution 41/206 C. Contributions to peacekeeping might be a relevant factor to include. The recommendations in the Secretary-General's latest report (A/71/323/Add.2)

were modest at best and did not adequately respond to the Assembly's request for a comprehensive review of the system. It was regrettable that 19 Member States were still unrepresented and 42 underrepresented.

44. **Ms. Norman Chalet** (United States of America) said that, as stated in the overview report on human resources management reform (A/71/323), many of the reform initiatives were fragmented and required full integration and proper implementation. Pending the presentation of an updated integrated human resources management framework at the seventy-third session, it was necessary to remain focused on the ultimate goal of ensuring that the United Nations was as effective, efficient and nimble as it could be by managing its workforce strategically.

45. The United Nations played a crucial role in forging the path to a more just and peaceful world and had no greater asset than the dedicated women and men who served it. The subject of human resources management must therefore remain a priority for the Committee and for the Organization in general. It was crucial to recruit and retain talent, promote career development, reward good performance and establish a system to improve poor performance. Some problems had persisted for too long, such as the inclusion on rosters of candidates who were no longer interested or qualified and the fact that the onboarding process could take more than six months. The broader human resources management framework did not include a system that would allow staff to move quickly to meet evolving needs. Further improvements and modernization, such as the use of flexible working arrangements, which had already become common practice in other major international entities, would allow the Organization to be more efficient in fulfilling its mandates in the long term; conversely, failure to address the shortcomings would cause it lasting harm. She commended the Secretary-General's efforts to improve human resources management, including the harmonization of contractual arrangements and conditions of service and initiatives to make staff more mobile. She also encouraged the Secretariat to streamline its work and set priorities so as to achieve greater transparency, effectiveness and accountability.

46. It had been several years since the Assembly had adopted a resolution on human resources management; action should therefore be taken at the current session. The Organization must prioritize and implement comprehensive workforce and succession planning that aligned human capital with current and future requirements. It must also continue to recruit and retain the best talent possible. Her delegation was encouraged by the steps already taken, including the introduction of online pre-selection examinations, which should help expedite the selection process. Her delegation also fully supported streamlined contracts and conditions of service, which would make it easier for staff to move between Headquarters and the field. The Secretariat should apply lessons learned to make the mobility programme adaptable and fit for purpose. It was also vital for the Organization to continue to promote a culture of performance management, in which the leadership was empowered to reward those who performed well and hold accountable those who fell short. That approach must be led from the top and should be accompanied by a culture of constant and open communication between managers and staff. The Secretary-General should also finalize the policy on whistle-blower protection as soon as possible, and the subjects of whistle-blower protection and ethics perception should be included in future staff engagement surveys in order to identify potential improvements. Her delegation was pleased with the work of the Ethics Office and welcomed the increased coordination between Headquarters and the field in the implementation of ethics-related policies and procedures. Lastly, noting the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on female empowerment, her delegation urged the Organization to become a leader in empowering women in the workforce, including through increased gender parity across the United Nations system.

47. It was time for the Committee to take an honest, hard look at what the Organization should be and what direction it should take in the future, taking the opportunity to transform the bureaucracy and shape its effectiveness and relevance in the decades ahead.

48. **Mr. Lim** Hoon-Min (Republic of Korea) said that effective human resources management was critical in order to enable the Organization to meet rapidly changing global needs. Continued efforts had been made to place the most qualified staff in the right positions and to motivate staff to achieve their full potential, for example through simplified and streamlined contractual arrangements and the

harmonization of conditions of service. More importantly, managed mobility, which would significantly contribute to the Organization's capacity to retain and deploy a dynamic, adaptable and global workforce, was finally being operationalized with the implementation of the first and second semi-annual managed mobility and vacancy exercises for the Political, Peace and Humanitarian Network (POLNET). His delegation congratulated the Secretary-General and his team on that achievement and urged all the relevant departments and offices to collaborate with a view to ensuring the success of managed mobility.

49. Although progress had been made, much remained to be done. The Organization needed a more effective and robust performance management scheme, more comprehensive workforce and succession planning, and improved gender balance in the Secretariat. More importantly, a more integrated human resources management framework was needed; his delegation welcomed the way forward proposed by the Secretary-General in that regard and looked forward to further discussions on the issue. Member States must come together in order to ensure a more effective, efficient and accountable Secretariat, and his delegation stood ready to play its part.

50. **Mr. Kalugin** (Russian Federation) said that, for several years in succession, no substantive decisions had been taken on the subject of human resources management. His delegation hoped that Member States would be able to achieve consensus on a new resolution at the current session.

51. His delegation was particularly concerned about the situation with regard to mobility. In its resolution 68/265, the General Assembly had approved reform proposals with far-reaching implications for the functioning of the Organization and had set the Secretary-General a number of tasks on which the success of the project depended. The prompt performance of those tasks was all the more important given that implementation of the mobility policy had already begun. Regrettably, however, little progress had been made thus far, particularly with regard to the request in paragraph 10 of the resolution to give equal treatment to internal and external candidates when considering applicants for vacancies. Neither the Secretary-General's latest report on mobility nor the previous documents on the subject contained any concrete proposals aimed at creating genuinely equal, non-discriminatory conditions for the recruitment of external candidates. That was a cause of concern, particularly in the light of the steady decline in the number of external appointments over the past six years: according to the Secretary-General's previous report on mobility (A/70/254), in the period 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011 there had been 857 external appointments, representing about 40 per cent of the total number of job opportunities, compared with 568, or 26 per cent, between 1 January and 31 December 2015 (A/71/323/Add.1). Furthermore, the Secretary-General's recent reports on human resources management contained proposals that would further restrict opportunities for external candidates to compete for selection as Secretariat staff, such as the initiative to include vacant positions at B, C, D and E category duty stations in a managed mobility exercise, to which external candidates had no access, and the proposal that staff members in the General Service and related categories should be allowed to apply for P-1, P-2 and P-3 positions that were not earmarked for the young professionals programme. His delegation wished to know whether the Secretariat was planning any measures to ensure that the situation regarding the recruitment of external candidates did not deteriorate any further and to prevent the Organization from becoming a closed shop.

52. His delegation was also concerned about the lack of clarity regarding the future budget implications of the mobility policy, at such time as it became fully operational. Not one of the Secretary-General's reports provided a forecast of the number of Secretariat staff who would be subject to mandatory geographic moves in the coming years and what costs could be expected in that connection.

53. His delegation noted the Secretariat's explanations concerning the criteria that would be applied to geographical rotation in cases where the number of staff subject to the relevant requirements in 2016 and 2017 exceeded the number of equivalent moves in 2014 and 2015. However, the possible legal implications of the application of those criteria remained unclear, in particular how such a practice of selective application of the mobility policy might be interpreted by the Organization's internal justice system. In that context, it should be remembered that

the General Assembly, in its resolution 68/265, had requested the Secretary-General to ensure the fair treatment of all staff members in the context of the reassignment pool related to the managed mobility framework.

54. His delegation hoped that exhaustive answers would be provided to those and other questions and that the discussions would allow the Committee to take fresh decisions on mobility with an emphasis on clarifying the parameters for the implementation of the project, taking into account the Organization's changing circumstances and requirements.

55. **Ms. Diaz** (Philippines) said that balanced geographical and gender representation in the Secretariat and throughout the United Nations system was of paramount importance. Noting that women currently accounted for 34.8 per cent of Secretariat staff, she urged the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to achieve the goal of 50/50 gender balance and to increase the representation of women from developing countries at senior levels. A global and dynamic United Nations workforce should have gender parity, reflect the geographical diversity of the Organization's membership and serve to uphold the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. In order to achieve equitable geographical representation, some adjustments were needed to the current system of desirable ranges, in particular the population factor weight of 5 per cent and the contribution factor weight of 55 per cent.

56. Noting that 74 per cent of staff in the General Service and related categories met the educational requirements for entry into the Professional category, she said that the current cap on the movement of staff from the General Service and related categories to the Professional category limited career growth and professional development. Her delegation therefore supported the change proposed by the Secretary-General in that regard, which would be consistent with the principle of equal treatment in staff selection.

57. The Assembly should reconsider the policy that required staff members to renounce permanent resident status in a country other than the country of their nationality prior to recruitment, particularly as the United Nations Appeals Tribunal had observed that, bearing in mind human rights principles and modern law of employment, the policy had no place in a modern international organization. Her delegation agreed with the interim measure in place, under which staff members in the Professional category were granted permission to retain permanent resident status in a country other than their country of nationality, pending reconsideration of the issue by the General Assembly.

58. Her delegation was pleased with the overall functioning of the internal justice system, which complemented efforts to improve human resources management. It also appreciated the Secretary-General's continued efforts with regard to performance management, accountability and discipline, and staff health and well-being.

59. **Mr. Takasu** (Under-Secretary-General for Management), having thanked Member States for their words of appreciation for the Organization's hard-working staff, said that a memorial ceremony had recently been held for 210 colleagues who had lost their lives in the line of duty between 1 January 2015 and 30 June 2016. Many staff around the world were working in difficult and dangerous conditions and the Organization's duty of care towards them was of paramount importance. The Secretariat counted on, and was grateful for, the Committee's support in that regard.

60. It had taken many years for the General Assembly to reach consensus on the mobility framework, as set out in resolution 68/265, and to reach the stage of implementation. The new system, which had been launched in January 2016 for POLNET, was operating on an opt-in basis for the first year, and although the number of staff choosing to participate had been modest thus far, that was not an indication of any problems inherent in the system; the numbers would increase when the system became mandatory in January 2017. Further adjustments would be needed, but the experience to date had been positive overall. The Organization was committed to equality of opportunity for internal and external candidates. The proposal to include vacant positions at B, C, D and E category duty stations in a managed mobility exercise was intended primarily to increase the number of staff members subject to mobility without impacting negatively on the recruitment of external candidates. Acknowledging the General Assembly's decision that the number of geographic moves in the relevant job

networks in 2016 and 2017 should be no greater than the average number of geographic moves in those networks in 2014 and 2015, he said that to date the number of such moves had remained below the specified maximum level. Any moves in excess of that level in any given year would be delayed to the following year. The staff selection and managed mobility system had been set out in detail in an administrative instruction (ST/AI/2016/1) for the sake of clarity and transparency.

61. He shared Member States' concerns about the length of the recruitment process, which was still too long, despite efforts to reduce it. The proposed reduction of the standard posting period for position-specific job openings from 60 days to 30 days for the Professional and higher categories would go some way towards reducing the overall recruitment timeline, but more needed to be done. To that end, the Secretary-General had launched a review of the entire recruitment process, from the initiation of a job opening to the selection of a candidate.

62. The Secretary-General had been striving to achieve more balanced geographical and gender representation, and the Secretary-General-designate was also strongly committed to that goal. However, it was clear that the improvements thus far had been modest. A gender equality strategy was under development, together with a year-by-year implementation plan aimed at achieving gender equality at every grade from P-1 to D-2 by 2030 at the latest. Departments and offices would be encouraged to use the human resources management scorecard to monitor progress. In addition to setting numerical targets, all internal policies, systems and processes would be reviewed with the aim of enhancing opportunities for women in the Secretariat. Furthermore, the new mobility system, in which vacancies were advertised within a broad job network rather than department by department, would make it easier to meet requirements relating to geographical and gender representation and the balance between external and internal candidates across the Organization.

63. The ad hoc working group established by the Staff-Management Committee to make recommendations for revising the policy on protection against retaliation had made significant progress. However, areas of disagreement remained, notably with regard to the scope of protected activities. Noting that the General Assembly, in its resolution 70/255, had expressed concern about the delay in the revision of the policy and had stated clearly that the policy should be separate and distinct from mechanisms for handling staff grievances and interpersonal disputes, he said that efforts would be made to conclude the discussions as soon as possible.

64. Lastly, with regard to Umoja, he noted that, with the deployment of cluster 5 on 1 November 2016, all Secretariat staff and uniformed personnel would be covered by Umoja Integration. Given that the introduction of Umoja represented a major change, there had naturally been teething problems, and stabilization had taken slightly longer than the anticipated six months. However, the system was now working well. Any persisting delays in payments to staff, including pension and separation payments, were unconnected with Umoja, despite misleading reports to the contrary. The Secretariat was working hard to address outstanding problems, and he appealed for Member States' understanding in that regard.

65. **Ms. Armstrong** (Director, Ethics Office), having welcomed the interest expressed in the work of the Ethics Office and the feedback provided, said that senior officials at the Assistant Secretary-General level and above whose confidential disclosure statements under the mandatory financial disclosure programme were completed and closed were eligible to participate in the voluntary public disclosure initiative. Given the importance attached by the Secretary-General and Member States to that initiative, the Ethics Office had made a particular effort to encourage participation.

66. The Ethics Office had been participating in the consultations on the Organization's protection against retaliation policy, which was an important component of the new Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Framework. Significant efforts had been made during those consultations to accept the helpful suggestions of staff members. In addition to the recourse mechanisms available for other forms of grievance, it was vital to ensure robust protection for individuals reporting serious forms of misconduct and also to offer measures for retaliation prevention. She looked forward to the conclusion of the consultations and the promulgation of the new policy.

67. Lastly, the Ethics Office, mindful that its independence was crucial to its work, endeavoured to keep abreast of good practices and institutional arrangements in similar offices in other organizations.

**Other matters**

68. **The Chair** drew attention to a letter dated 26 October 2016 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Chair of the Fifth Committee, transmitting a letter from the Chair of the Sixth Committee concerning agenda item 145, "Administration of justice at the United Nations" (A/C.5/71/10).

*The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.*